

In regards to Proposed Senate Bill 309, *which asks that a Connecticut teacher be permitted to purchase retirement credit in said system for teaching service at the American International Schools overseas under the Department of State.*

March 22, 2013

I want to acknowledge the efforts of Senator Doyle, Senator Fonfara and Representative Morin who sponsored this bill after I contacted them with this issue. And I want to thank this assembly for giving me the opportunity to speak regarding the bill. As an elementary school teacher, I am especially excited to be here and actually be part of the democratic system that I teach in the classroom. I would be remiss if I didn't give a wave to my class of third graders who are keenly watching this process.

I am here to talk about Proposed Senate Bill 309, which asks that a Connecticut teacher be permitted to purchase retirement credit in said system for teaching service at the American International Schools overseas under the Department of State.

I wish to buy years back towards retirement for 13 years I taught overseas at Department of State schools. I am a Connecticut certified teacher and a graduate of both Connecticut College and the University Of Connecticut. I taught in Somers for eleven years, before my ex-husband accepted a job with the United States Foreign Service, part of the Department of State, in 1989. We took our family overseas and served our country proudly in a diplomatic capacity. As a certified teacher I was eagerly welcomed by the American International Schools established by the State Department to provide embassy families with a status quo education, comparable to the education they would receive at home in the United States. These schools were funded in part by grants from the State Department, and the American Ambassador usually served as the chairman of the school board.

I taught overseas for thirteen years as part of the American diplomatic community. I taught an American curriculum, and maintained my Connecticut certificate with in-service and course work. Our school populations were diverse. Many were the children of Americans

teaching service at American International Schools, funded by the Department of State. I would like to buy back some of the years of my overseas service, but there is no provision for this in the state regulations.

I am respectfully asking that you review this policy to determine why a diplomatic assignment, like a military assignment, is not eligible for the buyback option. I hold our military and especially the families who support them in the highest regard, but I also know diplomatic families serve our country in postings far away from home with similar challenges.

When we accepted our first posting with the State Department, we were assured during the mandatory orientation for families, that the State Department had created and continued to fund its schools overseas to guarantee an equivalent educational experience for embassy and consulate dependents, and that instruction would meet the same rigorous standards required stateside. As an American teacher trained in an US college and credentialed by the state of Connecticut, I was part of that equivalent educational experience. My service overseas, with the opportunities and responsibilities to represent America both in the classroom and in the greater community, was important to the many hundreds of students and their families I had the pleasure of working with.

I believe that I should, just as my military counterparts, be able to count the years I taught overseas towards retirement.

I hope you will consider the passage of this bill and allow me to purchase some of those years.

Thank you for your attention.

Patricia M. Marks